

## ***Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Chemical Right-to-Know Program Frequently Asked Questions***

A compiled list of the most frequently asked questions about the Chemical Right-to-Know Program

### **What is the Chemical Right-to-Know Program?**

The Chemical Right-to-Know Program (ChemRTK) is a comprehensive new initiative that focuses on three major components. The program is designed to assure that adequate information is available to the public to assess risks for chemicals that are present in the local environments. The program responds to study findings that many commercial chemicals have very little toxicity information that is publicly available and that would be adequate for chemical risk assessment purposes. The project, to be implemented by EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT), will accelerate the development and dissemination of public health and environmental testing data through three main components:

- EPA will obtain baseline test data on the High Production Volume (HPV) commercial chemicals.
- EPA will assure extensive testing on chemicals to which children are disproportionately exposed.
- EPA will collect Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) release information on high-priority Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBT) chemicals.

### **Why is the Chemical Right-to-Know Program important?**

The Chemical Right-to-Know Program is important because it reflects a number of recent developments:

- The study, Toxic Ignorance, prepared by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), raised a variety of concerns about the untested chemicals which are manufactured and imported into the U.S. It found that baseline data on health effects were not publicly available for many high production volume chemicals. EPA prepared its own study, titled the Chemical Hazard Data Availability Study, which found similar results and reinforced the need for government leadership on this issue. Of about 2,800 high production volume chemicals, EPA's review determined that complete health and environmental effects data are publicly available for only about 7% of these chemicals. Finally, the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) also conducted a study entitled Public Availability of SIDS-Related Testing Data for U.S. High Production Volume Chemicals, which again reported similar results and indicated the need for action.
- The issues of PBTs and the vulnerability of children to toxics have become increasingly important and have pointed to gaps that need additional EPA actions. EPA is in the process of developing proposed rules for expanding Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) reporting requirements with regard to Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBTs) and to require the testing of chemicals to which

children have a high likelihood of exposure, but about which we lack sufficient toxicity data to assess the risk of human exposure.

### **How will this program affect the general public?**

Through the Initiative, EPA intends to collect health and environmental information to ensure that basic screening data are available on all HPV chemicals. The data will provide the basis for better and faster decisions on which chemicals present risks and how to eliminate or manage these risks. It is EPA's goal to assure that the public has access to health and environmental effects data for chemicals which are present in their environment. Improving EPA's and the public's understanding of the hazards of chemicals most commonly used in this country is a priority of this program.

### **How will the information regarding the ChemRTK Program be accessible to the general public?**

Information generated as a result of the ChemRTK Program will be posted on the EPA Chemical Right-to-Know Web Site (<http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemrtk>) . This Web Site will also contain documents providing information on the overall ChemRTK Program, as well as technical guidance for chemical manufacturers that are participating in testing programs. Additionally, all documents posted on the Web Site may be obtained in hard copy by contacting the Toxic Substances Control Act Hotline at (202)554-1404.

### **What is the time frame for the ChemRTK project?**

Vice President Gore directed EPA to finalize any regulations needed to fulfill these commitments by December of 1999. Actual program implementation and generation of the necessary testing information will continue through 2004. Through both voluntary and regulatory means, EPA will assure that testing and data collection meets the goals set by the Vice President.

### **What is the HPV Challenge Program?**

The HPV Challenge Program is a key element of the Chemical Right-to-Know initiative announced this year, on the eve of Earth Day, by Vice President Gore and EPA Administrator Carol Browner. As part of this initiative, EPA, in partnership with industry and environmental groups, created a major ground breaking voluntary chemical testing effort--the HPV Challenge Program. This program was developed to make publicly available a complete set of baseline health and environmental effects data on HPV chemicals. This data is to be collected for each chemical on EPA's list of HPV chemicals (defined as those manufactured in, or imported into, the United States in amounts equal to or exceeding 1 million pounds per year). Testing will be necessary only when existing data are not adequate. The program will generally be carried out in a manner consistent with the internationally-recognized testing protocol (as developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Screening Information Data Set (SIDS) program) to ensure that the testing can be contributed to the international effort and, conversely, that international SIDS testing and assessments can be used to fulfill the Challenge Program's requirements. The data generated through this program will be made available to the

public, fulfilling the EPA's commitment to the public's right-to-know. For more detailed information on the HPV Challenge Program, see the FAQs developed specifically for the program.

### **What does it mean if a chemical has no test data available?**

International authorities agree that certain basic tests are necessary for a minimum understanding of a chemical's toxicity. This basic level of testing and other information is called the Screening Information Data Set, or SIDS. The absence of test data means that the chemical has not had this testing and thus there is little or no information available on the behavior of a chemical that can help determine how hazardous a chemical may be to human health and the environment.

### **Does missing data mean that the chemical isn't safe?**

No. It means that we don't know enough about these chemicals to make even a screening level decision on their hazard or risk. It does not mean that the chemical is hazardous, but it also does not mean that the chemical is safe.

### **Will EPA publish the results of its reviews?**

Once testing has been completed under the HPV Challenge Program, EPA will review the test results, and work with others to develop an accurate, screening quality hazard assessment of the chemical in a format that meets the public's right-to-know needs.

### **How do I find out more about the EDF report?**

The Toxic Ignorance Report can be found at Internet Address : <http://www.edf.org> , or a copy may be obtained by calling EDF at 1-800-684-3322.

### **How can I get a copy of EPA's Chemical Hazard Data Availability Study?**

You can get access to this by contacting the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Hotline at 202-554-1404 or by checking EPA's web page at <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemtest/hazchem.htm> .

### **How can I get a copy of CMA's report on "Public Availability of SIDS-Related Testing Data For U.S. High Production Volume Chemicals?"**

You can get a copy of this report by contacting CMA Publications at 301-617-7824. The report order number is #610336 and the cost is \$50.00 for non-CMA members and \$35.00 for CMA members.

**How can I as a citizen get the information I need about hazardous chemicals in my community that is available now?**

There are multiple sources of information. One is the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), which identifies the amount of chemicals being released in communities by certain industries. The TRI Chemical Fact sheets describe some of the hazardous effects of these chemicals to humans and to the environment. Information on TRI chemicals can be obtained from the EPCRA (Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know) Hotline at 1-800-424-9346, or visit the web site at <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/tri> . You can also access such information through (1) EDF's "Scorecard" through the Internet at <http://www.edf.org> or calling 1-800-684-3322, or (2) EPA's Envirofacts, available through the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/enviro> .

**How does the ChemRTK Program relate to the Community Right-to-Know Program?  
How does it relate to other Agency initiatives?**

The ChemRTK Program is a new initiative that involves generating data for chemicals -- basic screening information on HPVs, potential health effects of children's exposure to chemicals, and release information on PBT chemicals. Our national experience with the Community Right-to-Know Program, which includes the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), has shown us that providing easily accessible, understandable, and reliable information on toxic chemicals can be a powerful tool for informing the public about environmental issues. The TRI data, provided by the Community Right-to-Know Program, serves as an indicator of where exposures might be significant. In the absence of industry generated exposure data, TRI provides a clue of what areas to pursue. What has been missing for the communities who use TRI data has been the specific hazard data that will allow the risk equation [ hazard x exposure = risk] to be completed. EPA's ChemRTK program will assure that at least a base level of hazard data is available at the local level. All three actions in the ChemRTK target HPV chemicals to which there is a high likelihood of human exposure. The HPV Challenge and Test Rule will specify a base set of test data as outlined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Screening Information Data Set (SIDS). The Children's Health Test Rule will require more extensive testing of a subset of chemicals focusing on health effects that are of particular concern with respect to children.

**What environmental organizations are active in the ChemRTK Initiative?**

EPA has worked extensively with the Environmental Defense Fund in developing this Program. EPA looks forward to engaging all interested environmental organizations in implementing this program.